

ARTICLE APPEARED

NEW YORK TIMES
3 October 1985

MOSCOW IDENTIFIES BODY IN LEBANON AS A RUSSIAN AIDE

CALLS KILLING 'ATROCITY'

Soviet Indirectly Blames Israel for Kidnappings in Beirut by Moslem Extremists

By PHILIP TAUBMAN

Special to The New York Times

MOSCOW, Oct. 2 — The Soviet Union said a man found slain in West Beirut today had been positively identified as one of four Russians abducted in the Lebanese capital Monday by Moslem extremists. Moscow called the killing "an atrocity which cannot be pardoned."

At the same time, the Kremlin, in an official statement broadcast tonight on the television news and published by the Tass press agency, said it held Israel indirectly responsible for the abductions. But the Kremlin stopped short of threatening any retaliation.

[In Lebanon, officials said the body of the slain man, whom they identified as Arkady Katakov, a secretary at the Soviet Embassy in West Beirut, had been recovered from an open lot near Beirut's shell-ravaged stadium. Page A14.]

[In Paris, a Soviet official accompanying Mikhail S. Gorbachev at the start of a four-day visit to France said Moscow had "turned to various groups in Lebanon in order to save our Soviet citizens." The spokesman, Leonid Zamyatin, added, "We have addressed this plea also to the Syrian leadership." Syria is the Soviet Union's closest ally in the Middle East.]

Reaction Closely Monitored

Western diplomats, closely monitoring Moscow's reaction to the first terrorist attack against the Soviet Union in the Middle East in recent years, said that some kind of retaliatory strike could not be ruled out but that one seemed unlikely.

Moslem extremists have threatened to kill all the Russians — the others abducted were Valery Mirkov and Oleg Spirin, both diplomats, and Dr. Nikolai Virsky, the embassy doctor — unless there is an immediate end to the fighting in the northern Lebanese port of Tripoli. The fighting is between Syrian-backed leftist and Communist militia men on the one hand and Sunni Moslem extremists on the other.

Blaming Israel

Moscow said Israel was indirectly responsible for the kidnapping because Israel was the "prime cause of internal Lebanese strife, of which Soviet citizens became innocent victims."

"However," the statement went on, "this does not absolve those who were the immediate organizers and perpetrators of the atrocity."

The ultimate Soviet response, the Western diplomats said, will depend on several factors, including the treatment of the three remaining hostages, the political situation in Lebanon and the Middle East and Moscow's ability to project its military forces

into the area if it decides to retaliate. Moscow has no military bases within easy striking distance of Lebanon.

The brief Kremlin statement, which placed direct responsibility for the kidnapping and killing on "an extremist Moslem group," also noted that "those who could have stopped the criminal action did not do everything possible."

This conduct, the Kremlin warned, will have a "most negative effect" on Soviet attitudes.

The statement did not identify those who failed to take preventive action, leaving unclear whether Syria was included in this group.

Syria, according to Western diplomats, has worked closely in the past with pro-Iranian terrorist groups in Lebanon, and Syrian security forces are considered by Western intelligence agencies to be familiar with many terrorist activities in Lebanon.

Any cooling in relations between Damascus and Moscow would have major ramifications in the Middle East.

Immediate Release Demanded

"The Soviet Government is strongly demanding the immediate and unconditional release" of the hostages, the statement said.

It added, "Procrastination in this matter, let alone violence against the Soviet citizens, will further aggravate the guilt of all those who have anything to do with this matter."

Soviet statements about the kidnappings, which have not mentioned the names of the four Russians, including the one who was killed today, have minimized Soviet links to the fighting in Tripoli. The two groups that have taken responsibility for the kidnappings have demanded that the Soviet Union intervene with Syria to end the fighting between pro-Syrian and pro-Iranian Moslem forces in Tripoli.

The Soviet Government statement said Moscow "has no relation at all" with the groups fighting in Tripoli. Western diplomats said Syrian forces, equipped with Soviet arms, could quickly end the fighting in Tripoli by withdrawing support from pro-Syrian militias.

The Kremlin also said the killing was "all the more condemnable since the Soviet Union has always been a friend of the Lebanese and other Arab peoples and a consistent advocate of the preservation of unity, independence and territorial integrity of Lebanon, an end to bloodshed in that country and a political settlement of its problems."

Earlier today, a Tass report from New York noted that President Reagan had denounced the abductions in Beirut. It also quoted Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, the United Nations Secretary General, as condemning the kidnappings.

Moscow Seeks Help

Special to The New York Times

PARIS, Oct. 2 — A Soviet spokesman said today that Moscow had "turned to various groups in Lebanon" for help in securing the release of the remaining three Russian hostages.

The spokesman, Leonid Zamyatin, who is in Paris with Mr. Gorbachev, said, "The Soviet Union is doing everything possible in order to protect its Soviet citizens in Lebanon."

"Our line is to condemn terrorist attacks and our endeavor will be to protect Soviet citizens in Lebanon," he said. "We have addressed this plea also to the Syrian leadership."